



December 2015 Newsletter

Dear All,

Am so pleased to be able to send this final newsletter of 2015 out before Christmas! Personally, it has been an exciting year, I have made all sorts of new work both in textiles and other media, some of which was exhibited in New York. I have met so many interesting people and made friends through new workshops and community projects. I wish there was time to get in touch with everyone individually to say thank you for your support throughout the year and for all the cards I have received but I am very grateful.

I am expecting 2016 to prove just as eventful with a months teaching trip to New Zealand confirmed for July. The trip begins with the [ANZEG](#) conference where I will be giving the "[Diamond Stitches](#)" talk and the Klimt and Kimono workshops. I will then be touring both the North and South islands teaching the Seed Packets and Illuminated Letters [workshops](#). If anyone has any tips for things I must do while I am there, do let me know, it is such a brilliant opportunity I am thrilled and will be trying to fit as much in as possible.

December has been a quieter month for me, although I have been doing some planning and research for a new project where I will be working with a local historian and the curator of the [Vale and Downland museum](#) to create a series of contemporary samplers showing some of the notable historic and modern buildings in Wantage. The museum's collection contains a number of historic samplers which will be exhibited from 1st June – 16th July together with loans from the Lockinge Estate and contemporary examples made by local needlewomen including a couple of mine.

The first one shown here, I made in 1998 just before I got married. It is very traditional with biblical text, a name and date. It uses a variety of stitches including cross stitch, blanket stitch, herringbone, stem stitch and at the bottom, probably most interesting panel is drawn thread work.





The second sampler contains antique hand painted porcelain buttons, a similar selection of stitches in small bands but here, the bottom section is embroidered in silk floss in a variety of whitework designs.

Another very exciting and challenging opportunity for me begins in January and is completely different to anything that I have done before in that it will be with dementia and Alzheimer's sufferers. Along with nine other Oxfordshire artists, who work in a variety of disciplines, I will be attending training days designed to explain how best to work with sufferers. Alongside these workshops, each artist will have a personal mentor who will assist in the design a series of 8 sessions which will be delivered to patients at a variety of venues.

I will be keeping blogs of both these projects as usual and hope to be able to share some of the experiences and lessons learned during the dementia sessions and of course photographs and images of the textile samplers as they develop.

As well as planning for this work, I have been running some classes at my local library for a variety of age groups. I feel quite ashamed to say that I haven't been into the library for some years, with the advent of the kindle it is just too easy to find a book online and download it. In the meantime the library has become much more dynamic space - it is now the centre for information for services and events in the community, there are computers, newspapers and work areas, not the silent forbidding place that I remember from my childhood.

In order to keep the costs down and to make the workshops accessible to anyone who cared to drop in, we made small book structures using recycled leaflets from local events. The image here shows the books made by the children's reading group.



Before I get on to exhibitions I just wanted to mention the [Distance Learning](#). As I mentioned in my last newsletter, I am now offering the Distance Learning course as one printed volume. I have one copy left before I will have to do a reprint so if you are interested do let me know. The cost including postage is £55.

There are two new Distance Learning Units to show, Unit Two from [Anne Middleton](#) and Unit Five from [Susan Cobley](#).



So of course the month hasn't passed without a few trips out and I am sure I wasn't the only one to visit the monumental [Ai Weiwei exhibition](#) at the Royal Academy. Certainly the most influential political artist of his generation, his was probably the most beautiful, impactful and moving of all the blockbuster exhibitions that have been held in this space over the last few years.

As you enter the first gallery you are confronted with *Straight*, a sculpture made from thousands of perfectly straight iron rods laid in vast undulating piles. These rods were retrieved from the poorly built schools that collapsed during the Sichuan earthquake of 2008 killing over 5,000

students. In an allusion to the "bent" and corrupt authorities who allowed these substandard constructions to be built, these twisted and distorted pieces of metal have been restored to their original shape.

Alongside, is a wall dedicated to recording the names of each of the students who perished in the disaster. Each death accounted for and child recognised through the determination of Ai and the *Citizens' Investigation*, 2009-11 despite the resistance of the Chinese authorities.

In 2008 while his installation in the Turbine Hall at Tate Modern of 100 million hand painted porcelain sunflower seed Ai was arrested and held for 81 days without explanation. The final room of the exhibition contains *S.A.C.R.E.D* a series of six dioramas made in response to this internment each depicting a room where a fibreglass figure of the artist is shown complete with the young guards assigned to



watch him 24 hours a day, standing completely still, not allowed to move, speak or blink their eyes in any form of communication.



In a completely different genre of work [Periodic Tales: The Art of the Elements](#) is shown at Compton Verney, the beautiful independent national art gallery with 'Capability' Brown landscape gardens located nine miles from Stratford-upon-Avon. The exhibition is the response from predominantly contemporary artists to the nature and cultural significance of a number of the elements which would normally be seen in the Periodic Table in brightly coloured rows and columns, the ultimate representation of order.

Cornelia Parker's *30 Pieces of Silver* commemorates Judas' betrayal of Christ in a work in which a variety of discarded silver-plate objects were flattened by a steam roller and then suspended on wires so that they hover just above the ground. In another work referencing the metal, Parker has framed handkerchiefs used to clean the tarnish from various silver objects once associated with famous or infamous figures from history.

I think that is all my news for this month, and as the end of the year is fast approaching, all that remains is for me to wish everyone a very Happy Christmas and New Year and hopefully some time in between the cooking and general frenetics to work on some personal projects.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne'.